

Tornado *Safe Rooms* Save Lives!

Last spring's May tornadoes proved a *Safe Room* will help you survive a tornado. For about the cost of remodeling a bathroom, you can build a secure room inside your home that will protect you from high winds and flying debris.

What is a *Safe Room*? A *Safe Room* is an anchored, reinforced enclosure able to withstand high winds and flying debris. It is anchored to the ground to withstand extreme winds and reinforced either steel reinforced concrete or steel sheathing to make the walls and ceiling virtually puncture-proof. Day in and day out, a *Safe Room* frequently functions as a storage room, closet or laundry room.

How is a *Safe Room* constructed? *Safe Rooms* are designed to withstand winds up to 250 miles per hour, as well as resist impacts from objects traveling up to 100 miles per hour. *Safe Rooms* can be constructed of concrete, reinforced masonry, a wood frame with plywood and steel sheathing, or a wood frame with concrete masonry. The doors are 14-gauge or 20-gauge steel with three hinges and are equipped with three deadbolts to keep them from flying open.

The plans in *Taking Shelter From the Storm: Building a Safe Room Inside Your House*, were designed and reviewed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Wind Engineering Research Center at Texas Tech University, and the National Association of Home Builders. You can order *Taking Shelter From the Storm: Building a Safe Room Inside Your House*, FEMA Publication 320, by calling 1-888-565-3896. You can download the text from the FEMA website (www.fema.gov/mit/tsfs01.htm).

Where should I build a *Safe Room*? You can build a *Safe Room* either in a basement or in an interior room on the first floor of a house. If you have a mobile home, build a detached *Safe Room* or an underground shelter. Plan for about five square feet of floor area per person.

What supplies should I have in my *Safe Room*? You should have a first aid kit, prescription medications, a NOAA Weather Radio, a battery powered radio, flashlights, spare batteries, an extra set of car keys, a credit card, cash, special items for infants, elderly or disabled family members. Stock your *Safe Room* a three-day supply of non-perishable food, water, a non-electric can opener, blankets or sleeping bags, a change of clothes and heavy-duty shoes. You might want to keep important documents and family photo albums in your *Safe Room*.